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Small-Scale Agriculture Today

Office for Small-Scale Agriculture



SPRING 1993

U.S. Department of Agriculture - Cooperative State Research Service - Agricultural Research For A Better Tomorrow

AT ISSUE...GREAT IDEA!

We can justifiably be proud of the role of America's diverse agricultural industry, whose products and services contribute continuously to improvements in our quality of life. Conversely, over the past decade the perceived importance of agriculture has slipped markedly at the grassroots level, in part because it is taken for granted by too many people. There are abundant quantities of food and fiber for consumers. In many of America's rural communities State and Federal support for agriculture is on the wane. Thus, anyone who understands the significance and importance of agriculture to a community will appreciate the tenacity of John Hall, a Maryland extension agent in Kent and Queen Anne's Counties on Maryland's Eastern Shore -- better known as Chesapeake Bay Country. OSSA commends his bellwether idea. The story needs to be told. The article that follows is taken from the Easton, Maryland, Delmarva Farmer, February 2, 1993, p. 4.

"Few would argue with the following assessments of our societal makeup:

- With each generation, we grow more and more distant, culturally, from our agricultural heritage.
- The understanding of farming and the farmer -- the production of food and its producer -- is alien to a vast majority of the American public.
- The 'food chain' often is understood to be nothing more than some sort of a customer control device stretching from the rear of the supermarket to the checkout counter.
- So far have we travelled from our agrarian roots that children (probably encouraged by teachers who are only one step less distant from the farm in their ancestry) telephone their county extension offices seeking information on how farmers are polluting the Chesapeake Bay.

Amid that ignorance (yes, let us call it what it is, but let us assess no blame, for we may share it) there is a significant project under way on the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

There, in Talbot County, a dinner meeting will be held later this month which, if expanded out of its microcosm in the county to a nationwide forum of sorts, could help define food and farm policies of the future.

The dinner will be held on February 25. Tickets are \$12.50 each. The event is being billed as the Talbot Ag Awareness Dinner. Its purpose is to explore the role of agriculture in the life and lifestyle of Talbot County and its contribution to the county's economic health and vitality.

Farmers are being urged to buy one ticket for themselves and at least one more for a friend, being sure that the friend is a non-farmer who needs a short course in agricultural awareness.

The dinner was the brainchild of extension agent John Hall, a livestock agent in Kent and Queen Anne's Counties who was given the added responsibilities of the entire extension program in Talbot when budget constraints reduced the county office function to three days a week.

Something's wrong here, Hall thought, when the Extension Service, an essential ingredient in farm and country life for more than three quarters of a century, has to battle for survival. Perhaps, he thought, the good folks of Talbot County have forgotten how important agriculture is to them and to their way of life. A reintroduction is in order, he decided. Thus, the dinner."

IMPORTANT

Topics, technologies and calendar of events (yours) are very important to the Office for Small-Scale Agriculture (OSSA). Keep them coming! Also, recent magazine articles have increased circulation. If you do not want to receive our free quarterly newsletter or if you change your mailing address, write us. Our address: H.W. Kerr, Jr., USDA-CSRS, OSSA, Suite 328-A Aerospace Center, Washington, DC 20250-2200; telephone 202-401-1805; Fax 202-401-1804.

PLEASE CIRCULATE

TOPICS AND TECHNOLOGY

New Blackberry - A new thornless blackberry named Arapaho which matures 2 weeks earlier than Navaho was released this summer by the University of Arkansas. Contact: James N. Moore; Department of Horticulture, Plant Science Building, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, AR 72701; telephone 501-575-2603.

Man-Powered - There is an International Registry of Pedal-Powered Utility Vehicles and Equipment. For more information write and enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope. Contact: Ken Hargesheimer, P.O. Box 1901, Lubbock, TX 79408; telephone 806-744-8517.

Why Wait? - Wheat yields can be cut in half by rains that bury many seeds or tiny sprouts. Now available is published information that farmers can use in deciding whether replanting is necessary after the storm. Contact: Steven E. Hinkle, USDA-ARS, Central Great Plains Research Station, P.O. Box 400, Akron, CO 80720; telephone 303-345-2259.

Audiotapes on Agriculture - Featuring workshops from the 1993 National Farmers' Direct Marketing and the 1993 Ecological Farming Conferences on marketing, sustainable agriculture, management, organic farming and roadside promotion. Contact: Richard Reese, Audio Productions, 8806 S. Lake Stevens Road, Everett, WA 98205; telephone 1-800-488-545 (Canada 1-800-256-2834), Fax 206-334-7866.

Question - In one acre there are how many square feet? Square meters? Answer is somewhere in the newsletter.

Food Stamp Applications - "Almost one in 10 Americans now depend on the Food Stamp Program to help meet their nutrition needs. Although the program is run by individual State agencies, applications for food stamps also are available at Social Security offices." (*Lubbock Avalanche Journal*, September 13, 1992, p. 2E)

Hotline - Questions on wetlands protection laws can be answered by calling a new toll-free hotline installed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Contact: EPA, 410 M Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20460; telephone 1-800-832-7828.

Common Sense - "Meadowlark Economics" is a new book that explores common ground between seemingly conflicting points of view, i.e., ecology vs. economy, individuals vs. community, etc. The 144-page book costs \$14.95 (paperback). Contact: Rina Maiorano, M.E. Sharpe Inc., 80 Business Park Drive, Armonk, NY 10504; telephone 1-800-541-6563.

Free - A healthy bay starts with us. Write for a packet of items that help save and protect local waterways. Contact: The Chesapeake Bay Program, Communications Office, Maryland State House, Annapolis, MD 21401; telephone 301-974-5300, Fax 301-974-3275.

Water - The addition of a water-absorbing synthetic polymer into the soil increases the water-holding capacity, thus significantly increasing availability of water to plants. For more information contact: Daniel J. Wofford, Western Polyacrylamide, Inc., P.O. Box 790, Castle Rock, CO 80104; telephone 303-688-3814.

Unique - A 12-page bulletin "Guide" with 100 ideas for healthy travel, plus a listing of 49 camps that offer vegetarian food is available for \$3. Contact: Vegetarian Resource Group, P.O. Box 1463, Baltimore, MD 21203; telephone 410-366-8343.

Current Source - The National Food and Energy Council (FEC), a nonprofit association of electric power suppliers and allied industries, is particularly interested in the use of electricity in agriculture. Contact: Richard S. Hiatt, FEC, 409 Vandiver West, Suite 202, Columbia, MO 65202; telephone 314-875-7155.

Peck of Facts - For a free copy of "Profitability of Different Apple Orchard Systems in the Eastern United States," contact: Stan Ernst, 216 Kottman Hall, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1044; telephone 614-292-2011.

Discovery - Faster-than-expected progress has occurred in producing a semisynthetic version of taxol, a cancer drug derived from Pacific yew tree bark. Further, it is expected by 1995, firms will no longer have to derive taxol from yewbark.

Tree Protectors - For information and free sample contact: T.B. Mills, Tree Pro, 445 Lourdes Lane, Lafayette, IN 47905; telephone 317-463-1011, Fax 317-463-3157.

Tip - Clean out bluebird boxes!

Summer Internship - Research in Sustainable Agriculture at Ohio State University, June 21 - September 1, 1993. For more information and application contact: Kamyar Enshayan, Sustainable Agriculture Program, 1735 Neil Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210; telephone 614-292-3786.

Costs \$6.00 - An audiotape of the keynote remarks at the 1992 Acres U.S.A. Conference by keynoter Charles Walters, the Acres U.S.A. editor, is available. Make your check payable to Acres U.S.A. and indicate audiotape #601. Contact: Judy Coleman, Box 9547, Kansas City, MO 64133; telephone 816-737-0064.

How Old? - "Farmers under 35 now own only six percent of the nation's farmland. By contrast, farmers 55 and older own more than 55 percent of all farmland. Farmers under age 35 own one-third less land than they did ten years ago, while farmers over age 65 own one-third more." (*Acres U.S.A.*, January 1993, p. 15)

Power - The 1993 Nineteenth Annual Steam and Gas Show Directory costs \$5 postpaid. Contact: Judy Souder, Stemgas Publishing Co, P.O. Box 328, Lancaster, PA 17603; telephone 717-392-07331.

Now Available - "Highbush Blueberry Production Guide." The first comprehensive guide to growing highbush blueberries, 168 color photos, 27 tables, 24 drawings and charts; costs \$45 each. Contact: Northeast Regional Agricultural Engineering Service (NRAES), 152 Riley-Robb Hall, Cooperative Extension, Ithaca, NY 14853-5701; telephone 607-255-7654.

Rural Heritage - This quarterly how-to magazine was established in 1975 and dedicated to preserving the traditional rural lifestyle and its use of draft-horse power. Subscription is \$14, sample \$5. Contact: Gail Damerow, Rural Heritage, 281-C Dean Ridge Lane, Gainesboro, TN 38562-9685; telephone 615-268-0655.

Prickly Pears - Imports from Mexico and South America of the fist-sized, five-ounce fruit whose taste has been compared to honeydew melon rose 51 percent from 1987 to 1989, to 2.7 million pounds. U.S. farmers are planting hundreds of acres from California to Texas. Although that hardly makes it a staple, the fruit of the prickly pear cactus does fetch prices comparable to kiwi fruit - about \$2 a pound - in those few supermarkets that stock it. (*The Wall Street Journal*, January 26, 1993, p. 1A)

Going Up - "The average cost of framing lumber reached \$376 per thousand board feet Friday, up 41 percent from \$266 in January 1992. Most homes take about 10,000 to 15,000 feet of lumber - including the more expensive wood such as doors, sashes, windows and millwork. The higher price of wood will add about \$1,800 to the builder's cost - and \$3,000 to the buyer's price." (*USA Today*, Wednesday, February 3, 1993, p. 1B)

Mushroom Production - "The volume of sales for commercially grown specialty mushrooms (shiitake, oyster and all other specialties) in 1991-92 totaled 4.44 million pounds, 4 percent above the 1990-91 volume. Virtually all specialty mushrooms are sold fresh. The value of the 1991-92 specialty mushroom crop amounted to \$17.2 million, 22 percent over the previous season." (*Ag Opportunities*, November/December 1992, p. 4)

New Carrot Cultivars - Fresh carrots for the Asian market and high vitamin A cultivars were the focus of a Carrot Cultivar Trial (48 cultivars) that was planted near Pasco, Washington. Copies of the foliage and root ratings are available. Contact: Erik Sorensen, WSU Cooperative Extension, Courthouse, Pasco, WA 99301; telephone 509-545-3511.

How Hot? - "Beef hamburgers should be cooked to an internal temperature of 160 degrees. Use a meat thermometer to check. The center of the meat should be light gray, and the juices should run clear." (*The Sun*, February 3, 1993, p. 2E)

Organic Grain - A new North Dakota State University survey shows that about 170,000 acres of certified organic grain existed in the Dakotas and Minnesota in 1991. (*The Forum*, January 18, 1993, p. 8B)

Apprenticeship Program - Live on a farm in Ohio, work and learn organic farming skills in exchange for room and board. Organized by Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association and Ohio State University Sustainable Agriculture Program. Contact: Kamyar Enshayan, Dept. of Entomology, 1735 Neil Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43210; telephone 614-292-3786.

Needed, IPM - Tree-killing avocado mites have turned up on 10,000 acres in San Diego County, California, threatening the area's \$132 million crop because little is known about the Central America-based pest. Scientists are trying to develop a predator mite. (*USA TODAY*, November 4, 1992, p. 17A)

Answer - There are 43,560 square feet or 4,047 square meters.

Selling - Write for a copy of the brochure "Marketing, Promoting and Advertising Nursery Products." Contact: Lydia Wiggins-Azimi, Cooperative Agricultural Research Program (CARP), Tennessee State University, Box 522, John Meritt Blvd., Nashville, TN 37209-1561; telephone 615-3210-3337.

CHANGING FARM PATTERN

"During the last 30 years, the United States lost about half its farms, with the land of bankrupt farmers being consolidated into larger farms. But recent USDA statistics document an increasing trend to small, part-time farms operated by retired or professional people. Located especially around large cities, these hobby and part-time farms contribute very little to the nation's food supply, 75 percent of which comes from 3 percent of its largest farms.

The motives that lure the new breed of farmer to the country range from a need for a clean, relaxed way of life (or a weekend respite from the rat race) to supplemental retirement income.

In 1991, the number of small farms (those with annual sales of \$1,000 to \$9,999) grew by 3,000 to a total of 1,006,000." (*Acres U.S.A.*, November, 1992, p. 25)

SPRING VISIT

If you plan to be in the Washington, D.C., area, go to the National Visitor Center run by the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS). This educational facility is located at the 7,200-acre Beltsville, Maryland, Agriculture Research Center, just off either exit 23 or 25 of the Capital Beltway. The modern exhibit hall is in an old log lodge. A staff is on hand to help you learn the latest on any topic of small or large-scale research across the Nation.

Visitor handouts, videos, and displays are helpful to teachers, agriculturists, or other professionals. Last year, the National Visitor Center welcomed guests from over 80 nations drawn by fame. You can arrange a guided tour of the fields, orchards, and livestock for your group by calling 301-504-8483.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 2-3, 1993 - Greenhouse Tomato Short Course, Hinds County Cooperative Extension Service, 1735 Wilson Blvd., Jackson, MS. Contact: Richard G. Snyder, Mississippi State University, P.O. Box 21, Crystal Springs, MS 39059; telephone 601-892-3731, Fax 601-892-2056.

April 5-9, 1993 - Soil Symposium on Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Carbon Sequestration, Fawcett Center for Tomorrow, Ohio State University, Columbus, OH. Contact: Carol Whitman, 1621 N. Kent, Room 60 LL, Arlington, VA 22209; telephone 703-235-9018, Fax 703-235-9046.

April 17, 1993 - Missouri Goat Conference, Allen Hall Conference Room, Lincoln University. Contact: Helen Swartz, Lincoln University, Allen Hall, Jefferson City, MO 65101; telephone 314-681-5533, Fax 314-681-5546.

May 1-2, 1993 - The 20th Annual Maryland Sheep and Wool Festival, Howard County Fairgrounds, West Friendship, MD. Contact: Mary Streaker, 1739 Circle Road, Towson, MD 21204; telephone 410-823-4037.

May 29, 1993 - Seventh Annual Baltimore Herb Festival, 10 am to 6 pm, Leakin Park (just off the Baltimore Beltway). Admission \$3. Contact: Mary Louise Wolf, 2301 Pickwick Road, Baltimore, MD 21207; telephone 410-448-0406.

July 8-11, 1993 - HERBS 93. International Herb Growers and Marketers Association Eighth Annual Conference, Red Lion Hotel, Bellevue, WA. Contact: Edward Stygar, IHGMA, 1202 Allanson Road, Mundelein, IL 60060; telephone 708-949-4372.

July 13, 1993 - Virginia Blueberry, Blackberry Day (Including Shift Trellis Thornless Blackberries), Blackstone, VA. Contact: Herbert D. Stiles, Southern Piedmont Agricultural Experiment Station, P.O. Box 448, Blackstone, VA 23824; telephone 804-292-5331.

August 1-4, 1993 - The 84th Northern Nut Growers Association annual meeting, Pittsburg State University, Pittsburg, KS. Contact: Tucker Hill, 654 Beinhower Road, Etters, PA 17319-9774; telephone 717-938-6090.

August 10-12, 1993 - NE Agricultural Trade Show, Rodman Lott and Sons Farm, Seneca Falls, NY. Contact: Melanie Wickham, Route 414, Rodman Lott and Sons Farm, Seneca Falls, NY 13148; telephone 716-526-5356.

August 13-15, 1993 - 19th Annual Summer Conference, the Organic Farmers Association (NOFA), Hampshire College, Amherst, MA. Contact: Julie Rawson, RFD 2, Sheldon Road, Barre, MA 01005; telephone 508-355-2853

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